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## RECENT THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE.

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DAS PHILOSOPHISCHE GOTTESPROBLEM in seinen wichtigsten Auffassungen. Von DR. JOSEPH GEYSER. Bonn: Verlag von Hanstein, 1899. Pp. iv + 291. M. 3.80.

THE author's purpose is to prepare the way for a theodicy by showing the historical genesis of the problem concerning the existence and nature of God in such a manner as to make clear the most important epistemological and metaphysical presuppositions entering into this problem. In other words, the author seeks to show how the nature of God has been understood in different periods, pointing out the historical and conceptual connection between the different views, and exhibiting their weakness or value for those who would today attempt the solution of the *Gottesproblem*.

The author confines his historical review chiefly to the ancient philosophers, holding that their systems are of chief importance for his purpose. Especially is this true of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, whose theory of knowledge the author calls *Intellectualismus*, through which alone theodicy is possible. Chap. i contains a review of the speculations from Thales to Socrates. In this period there was no thought of creation. Instead it was held that all becoming took place in a material substrate already at hand. On the one hand, the Eleatics assumed that reason, rather than the senses, must decide concerning the nature of being; but, on the other hand, the Sophists held the sensualistic theory of knowledge. Thus early did the epistemological problem come to the front, and skepticism in regard to the divine Being arose. Already, too, had the conflict between the teleological and mechanical theories of the world-process arisen. Chap. ii considers the *Gottesproblem* from the point of view of the teleological *Weltanschauung* of the most flourishing period of Greek philosophy. To this chapter the author devotes pp. 42-266. Chap. iii reviews materialism in the decline of ancient philosophy; chap. iv treats of ancient theosophy. The substance of chap. ii—the chief portion of the work—may be outlined as follows: It is possible to occupy one of the following epistemological positions concerning the *Gottesproblem*: (a) the empiristic, sensualistic theory of knowledge, closely allied with skepticism; the author traces the history of this

theory of knowledge from Protagoras to English empiricism; (*b*) the *Intellectualism* of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. This theory is accepted by the author as the only one which, in its modern application, really involves all that is needed for the *Gottesproblem*. The history of this Socratic-Aristotelian *Intellectualism* is traced through the Middle Ages into modern thought, and the theory is defended both against (*c*) Cartesian rationalism and (*d*) Kantian criticism, which would stop short of God in mere subjectivity. Socrates refuted the sensualistic theory of knowledge by inductively establishing the fact that true knowledge is by conceptions, and is consequently universal and objective. Are not sensations material for the elaborative work of a mind that is real in order thus to form and possess conceptual knowledge? Do we not also know the reality of the divine mind? In general, this Socratic-Aristotelian *Intellectualism* would assume reason's capacity to know reality, and would trust the results of reason's cognitive processes as knowledge of reality, if only the laws of reason have been strictly observed. On this epistemological basis the author would have modern theodicy constructed.

I am confident that this work is of real value and would prove useful to those who are endeavoring to solve the *Gottesproblem*.

JAMES TEN BROEKE.

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#### A SHORT HISTORY OF FREETHOUGHT, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

By JOHN M. ROBERTSON, author of *Buckle and His Critics*.  
*The Dynamics of Religion*, etc. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1899.  
Pp. xv + 447. \$3.

MR. ROBERTSON is an avowed freethinker, and writes as such. The term "freethought" is used as synonymous with "rationalism;" "infidelity," "atheism," and "skepticism" being variants. It is thus defined: "A conscious reaction against some phase or phases of conventional or traditional doctrine in religion — on the one hand, a claim to think freely, in the sense, not of disregard for logic, but of special loyalty to it, in problems to which the past course of thinking has given a great intellectual and practical importance; on the other hand, the actual practice of such thinking." If this definition can be understood, it makes (1) a claim that logical thinking is in some way anti-religious; (2) an acknowledgment that freethought receives its impetus from religion